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1) What is the role of a diocesan Bishop?

The diocesan Bishop is the chief teacher, sanctifier, and shepherd of God's people. Most Bishops are given a diocese to govern spiritually, making sure the priests, deacons, pastoral workers and catechists in their diocese are preaching the Gospel and teaching sound doctrine to the flock. He is the principal teacher. The Bishop is the primary dispenser of all the sacraments. He has oversight of the liturgy.

He possesses the fullness of Orders, so that the fullness of Christ's grace can flow through in sacramental form, to the sanctification of the faithful. Through his relationships with the priests of his diocese, the Bishop is able to shepherd the people of his diocese. The Bishops have been given a special outpouring of grace, to continue the work that the Apostles started.

2) What is the meaning of the word 'Bishop'?

The word "Bishop" has its roots in the Greek word *episkopos*. The Prefix *epi* means over; *skopeo* means to look or watch. So *episkopos* means overseer, someone who watches over others. This was a term used for early Church leaders. In Latin, the word became *episcopus* and in Old English *bisceop*, and finally in modern English Bishop.

3) What does Apostolic Succession mean?

All Bishops are the successors of the Twelve Apostles whom Our Lord called to follow him. Apostolic succession is the uninterrupted line of Bishops, in communion with the Universal Church, extending back to the Apostles. By apostolic succession, we mean the continuous succession of the living Tradition of the Church from the Apostles to our time, and also the transmission of the same apostolic faith.

4) How is a Bishop appointed?

At least every three years, the Bishops of an ecclesiastical province meet to draw up a list of priests who are suitable candidates for the episcopate. This discussion is limited to the merits of individual priests proposed by their Bishops. After this meeting, the list is sent to the Apostolic Nuncio in Canada (based in Ottawa) who in turn forwards it to the offices of the Holy See at the Vatican.

When an Auxiliary Bishop is needed, the Diocesan Bishop puts forth his own recommendations and prepares a list of at least three candidates from either inside or outside of the diocese. He sends this to the Apostolic Nuncio, who in turn forwards it to the Holy See, after reviewing the list and adding his own opinion. This list can incorporate candidates proposed by the Diocesan Bishop, candidates discussed by the Bishops of the ecclesiastical province to which he belongs, or other names that the Apostolic Nuncio may suggest.

The "terna" is the shortlist of three names being discussed with the Holy See. After the "terna" has been decided, the Apostolic Nuncio as the personal representative of the Pope is instructed to commence an extensive investigative process on the episcopal suitability of each of the candidates. On average, this process may take two to six months.

Confidential advice in the form of letters or other documentation is invited from those who have worked closely with the candidates, including Bishops, priests, deacons, pastoral workers, religious and laity. When the Apostolic Nuncio has concluded his investigative process, he sends his final report containing his recommendation to the Holy See, usually to the Congregation of Bishops.

A principal responsibility of the Congregation of Bishops is to examine all the documentation presented to the Holy See by the Apostolic Nuncio and to advise the Holy Father, who alone decides the appointment of a Bishop. The Congregation fulfills this function by meeting in a session where the documentation gathered by the Apostolic Nuncio is presented. A number of episcopal appointments from throughout the universal Church may be discussed at this one meeting. The advice of the Cardinal Prefect and Bishop members of the Congregation is then communicated to the Holy Father. At a later time, the Pope makes his decision. In reaching his decision the Holy Father is not bound by the advice presented to him.

After the Pope has made his decision, the Prefect for the Congregation of Bishops informs the Apostolic Nuncio of his decision, who in turn contacts the appointed candidate to ask if he will accept the appointment. Through a letter, the Apostolic Nuncio officially informs the candidate and his Bishop of the appointment, requesting that the information remain strictly confidential until the Holy See makes the announcement.

5) What role does the Bishop have over the priests in his diocese?

The Bishop's role as diocesan overseer and supervisor includes being a friend, a brother and a father. A Bishop is an advisor and a mentor to the priests in his diocese. He defends their rights and determines if the priests are faithfully fulfilling their obligations. The Bishop also ensures that his diocesan priests have the means to sustain their spiritual, emotional and intellectual life.

6) Do different titles associated with the role of the Bishop have different meanings?

Yes, it varies. The titles or names refer to their particular pastoral ministry. The titles a Bishop can hold are Titular, Auxiliary, Eparchial, Coadjutor, and Emeritus.

7) What do these additional titles mean or designate?

Titular: The title of a Bishop assigned to a titular see, which is usually the name of a city or town that used to be the seat of a diocese, but its episcopal see is no longer in existence. Titular Bishops sometimes act as Auxiliary Bishops.

Eparchial: The title used by Orthodox and Eastern Catholic Churches for a Diocesan Bishop. Each Eparchial Bishop has his own diocese or "eparchy".

Auxiliary: The title of a full-time assistant to a Diocesan Bishop. Auxiliaries assist the Diocesan Bishop in a variety of ways. Usually they are appointed as vicars general or episcopal vicars of the diocese in which they serve.

Archbishop: The title given to a Bishop who presides over an ecclesiastical province. It means he oversees a diocese that has received the special designation of metropolitan see (either because it is large, highly populated or because it has a central geographic location or historical significance). The Archbishop also has a few limited responsibilities with regards to the other dioceses within the ecclesiastical province which are known as "suffragan dioceses". One such responsibility is to appoint a diocesan administrator if one has not been elected by the College of Consultors in the prescribed time following the resignation of the Diocesan Bishop.

Coadjutor: The title of a Bishop who has received a special role as in assisting the Diocesan

Bishop in his diocesan duties. A Coadjutor normally succeeds the Diocesan Bishop when the latter retires or dies.

8) If a priest has a title of "Monsignor", is he a Bishop?

No. The honorific titles of Chamberlain of the Holy See (C.S.S.) and Prelate of Honour (P. H.) are historically associated with the Chamberlains of the Papal Court and go back to the 14th century when the Court was for a time in Avignon, France. The title "Monsignor" comes from "Mon Seigneur", meaning "My Lord" - which used to be the common title in English for Bishops and which continues to this day in French. It is an honorary title given to a diocesan priest in recognition of his contributions to the life of the Church.

9) Are Cardinals a step above Bishops?

Yes and no.

In terms of disciplinary, moral or administrative authority (with the exception of Auxiliary or Coadjutor Bishops who answer to the Diocesan Bishop), the role of Cardinals and Bishops at the service of their particular Churches is the same: to serve as the principal teacher, governor and sanctifier of the diocese.

Cardinals do, however, rank higher in the order of liturgical precedence and are given additional responsibilities at the service of the Universal Church. These responsibilities include electing a new Pope (in the event that the current one dies) and providing counsel – either individually or collectively - to the Holy Father on questions of major importance.

10) Is the Pope still a Bishop?

The Pope is the parish priest of Saint John Lateran Basilica, the Bishop of Rome, and the head of the Universal Church.

11) Where are the Bishops within the hierarchy of the Catholic Church?

The People of God are organized into dioceses or "particular Churches", each of which is under

the direction of a Bishop, who is assisted by priests, deacons and pastoral workers. The Pope as head of the College of Bishops is also the chief pastor of the Universal Church.

12) Does the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) have authority over the Bishops?

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops is the national assembly of the Bishops of Canada.

As such, it does not have authority over individual Bishops, unless so prescribed by Canon Law, or requested by the Bishops who are the members of the Conference, or mandated by the Holy See. Any joint actions taken by the Episcopal Conference are to have proper sensitivity and respect for the personal responsibility of each Bishop in relation to the Universal Church and to the particular Church entrusted to him. Normally, the CCCB and its President do not act in the name of all the Bishops of the country unless each has so consented.

Useful links:

["Bishops: Custodians of the Church"](#), Vatican Information Service, Sept. 13, 2010.